

朝日賞 The Asahi Prize

List of Award Recipients for 2007

- ◆ Momoko Ishii ◆ Sumitomo Takemoto ◆ Terunobu Miyazaki, Shinji Yuasa
◆ Yukio Fukuyama, Tatsushi Toda, Tamao Endo ◆ Shinya Yamanaka

(▲Click on the names to view detailed information about the winners)

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◆ Momoko Ishii (100), children's writer, always has a child's world in her heart



Momoko Ishii

Winnie the Pooh, Bunny Girl, Peter Rabbit. His translated books have been read by children throughout the ages. He was involved as an editor in "The Little Prince" and "Doctor Dolittle." With over 200 of his major works, he is unparalleled in both quality and quantity in the world of Japanese children's literature. "A masterpiece is not something that stands out as outstanding. It is something that comes from life itself." He now feels this way. He first

encountered the original Winnie the Pooh in 1933, when he was 26 years old. Inukai Tsuyoshi's two grandchildren begged him to read it. He says he was captivated by the world in which Pooh, Piglet, and Eeyore live. "For the next five or six years, I spent my whole life reading Pooh. I wanted to know how the language of adults and children differed, and what children were thinking."

He opened his home to children and started the "Katsura Library," where children could read books freely. His activities were taken over by the "Tokyo Children's Library," and will celebrate its 50th anniversary in March this year.

Many of his books are stories told from a child's perspective and are full of humor and fantasy. When I asked her what her criteria for choosing books are, she answered simply and with a smile, "It's like what you like and dislike."

"It's hard to express the depth of characters like Winnie the Pooh and Eeyore. I think the original author has a certain flavor to them. I translated the text in words that are far removed from the original, but I think that if (the author) Milne could write in Japanese, he would have written it like this."

The Japanese translation "came to me after reading it over and over in my mind dozens of times," she said, and it is beautiful and has a good rhythm.

Children love books that adults don't get. Having seen such scenes, she is against forcing books on children.

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Asahi Shimbun CSR Promotion Department
"Asahi Award" Secretariat 5-3-2 Tsukiji,
Chuo-ku, Tokyo
104-8011 [TEL] 03-5540-7453 [FAX] 03-3541-8999

Asahi Shimbun Foundation 6F, Meiji Seimei
2-1-1 Marunouchi, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo
100-0005 [TEL] 03-6269-9441 [FAX] 03-6269-9442

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2000 ★Winners

"Adults shouldn't get too involved. Isn't it better not to say this or that? Even without telling them to read this, the children at Katsura Bunko were absorbed in reading it."

When she was young, she loved the old stories that her grandfather told her every night. She listened to the words "Once upon a time, there was a place" with excitement. "I have a slightly raspy, deep voice. I believe that fairy tales have eternal life." He has also published excellent works such as bestselling children's books "Non-chan Rides the Clouds," "Childhood Stories" and "Maboroshi no Scarlet Fruit." Even though he is now over 90 years old, he continues to revise his translations. He will turn

101 in March. He has not had a cold for the past four years. He loves the printed word and finds comfort just looking at it, so he reads books and looks over the newspaper every day with a magnifying glass. He does not watch television.

What are children's books? Ever since he encountered Winnie the Pooh, he has been thinking about this question. He continues to search for the answer even now. "Children's books and adult books. Although the distinction between them seems to have become clear, I am still on the way and cannot explain it. Sometimes I think I could write an adult-like children's book. I am still walking unsteadily between adulthood and childhood."

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Ishii Momoko

was born in Saitama Prefecture in 1907. She graduated from Japan Women's University. In 1940, she translated and published "Winnie the Pooh" (Iwanami Shoten). In 1954, she received the Kikuchi Kan Prize. In 1958, she opened the "Katsura Bunko" library. In 1993, she received the Japan Art Academy Prize. In 1994, she received the Yomiuri Literature Prize for "Maboroshi no Akami (Phantom Scarlet Fruit)". At the age of 96, she translated "Milne's Autobiography". She has also written many novels, including "Non-chan Rides the Clouds" and "Childhood Stories".

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◆ I can't stop talking about it – Takemoto Sumitayū (83), puppet theatre performer of Bunraku puppet theatre

The moment the tray cut into the "toko" (floor) on the right side of the stage turns around with the chanter and shamisen player on it, the joruri begins. "Put strength into your waist and lower abdomen, hold your breath, and pray to the chanter to hold the toko-bon (floor book) above your head, saying, 'Please let me perform my role safely.'" The story begins to flow quietly with the first breath, and the motionless puppets come to life, and the world of Bunraku begins to move. It has been

10 years since the late puppeteer Tamao Yoshida received the award. Takemoto Sumitayū, the first chanter to receive the Asahi Award, still speaks of the climax of the performance as the "kiriba narrator," the pinnacle of the chanter's profession, at the age of 83. "The situation and the characters are all up to the chanter to tell the tale. It's so scary and difficult, there's nothing good about it. Even after 60 years, it's not enough, I can't wait to tell it yet."

Born in Osaka, the birthplace of Bunraku, the Gidayū style of his father, the 6th Sumitayū, is a lullaby. He became a tayu despite the opposition of his parents, who knew the hardships of the arts, but his master, Toyotake Yamashiro Shōjō, was a man above him. He set his goals as his father and his senior apprentice, Takemoto Koshidayu. "Like me, he has a weak stomach and a bad voice. But he uses his voice well." With the determination to "love Bunraku," he was loved and trained by masters such as his father, Koshidayu, and shamisen player Nozawa Kizaemon II, and refined his "Sumidayu style" with its rich voice and overflowing emotion.

The foundation was laid over the 10 years since 1949, when Bunraku was split into two schools due to labor

1999-1990 ★Winners

1989-1980 ★Winners

1979-1970 ★Winners

1969-1960 ★Winners

1959-1950 ★Winners

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Mr. Takemoto Sumitomo

issues. There were not enough tayu, so he was given a big role that was “unsuitable” for him. “I was trained, I hung in there, and I stretched myself. Those days are what got me where I am today.” He invited young people from both schools to study groups and competed with each other. He spent fulfilling days. By 1963, when the split was resolved, he had gained something resembling confidence.

“That’s no good. He’s become arrogant.” Arrogance prevents growth. One day, after failing in rehearsals, Kizaemon said to his juniors, “This is your brother.” His nose was broken. “He’s not sympathetic.” He was given the title “Ninokuchimura” in a performance for young performers. He actually didn’t like it. But he spoke frankly, faithful to his teachings. Kizaemon, who doesn’t praise, said, “You’ve reached the standard.” It made him happy. It gave him real confidence that he still remembers when he’s in a difficult situation. He is strict in

teaching the younger generation. “The stomach and breath are the foundation. It’s only by embarrassing yourself on stage during rehearsals, getting scolded in the dressing room, and experiencing the subtleties of life that you can develop compassion. It’s best to be scolded while you’re still in the middle of it all.” Love is poured into the shamisen and puppets, and they are the driving force that tightens and guides the troupe. “If you are honest and love it, you will grow. Just say that you should love it more. I want living Bunraku to continue for a long time.”

Koshiji Dayu, who retired at the age of 76 and passed away at the age of 89, kept telling me, “Don’t quit.” “Once you retire, you can’t do it again. I’m not a very good performer, but I still have strength in my stomach. I want to speak for as long as possible. I’ve dedicated my life to Bunraku, so that’s all I wish for.”

In January, he will speak “Shinguchimura” at the National Bunraku Theater in Osaka’s New Year’s performance. The floor book that he receives with a renewed spirit is filled with gratitude for his past and sincere prayers for his future.

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Takemoto Sumitayū

was born in Osaka in 1924. His biological father is Tsuruzawa Yukichi, a Bunraku shamisen player, and his adoptive father is the 6th Sumidayū, a Living National Treasure. In 1946, he became the apprentice of Toyotake Kotsubodayū 2 (later known as Yamashiro Shōjō), and made his debut at the Yotsubashi Bunraku Theatre. In 1981, he was promoted to the highest rank of tayu, “Kiriba-gatari,” and in 1985 he took on the name of the 7th Sumidayū. In 1989, he became the first two generations of a father and son to become Living National Treasures in Bunraku. In 2002, he was made a member of the Japan Art Academy, and in 2005, he was appointed a Person of Cultural Merit.

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◆Breaking through the barriers to increasing HDD capacity

Terunobu Miyazaki (64), applied physicist

Shinji Yuasa (39), physicist



左から、湯浅新治さん、宮崎 泰信さん

(From left) Shinji Yuasa and
Terunobu Miyazaki

Spintronics, which combines magnetism and electricity, which were previously separate fields, is attracting attention. Miyazaki and Yuasa discovered a material with tunnel magnetoresistance (TMR), in which electrical resistance changes dramatically when a magnetic field is applied. This was achieved by thinning an insulator that normally does not conduct electricity down to the nanometer level. By using it in the reading section, the capacity of hard disk drives (HDDs) has increased 25 million times compared to about 50 years ago, making a great contribution to the development of the IT field. In

1988, the giant magnetoresistance (GMR), in which electrical resistance changes when a magnetic field is applied to a material made of iron and chromium, was announced. Miyazaki, who was a researcher in the same field, decided to turn

his attention to a slightly different material.

While researchers around the world were working on improving GMR, he decided to work on TMR, which had almost no effect at room temperature and had been ignored for nearly 20 years since its discovery. Miyazaki's research style is to "try anything and never give up" if he thinks something is good. This was because he was "not satisfied" with the results of previous experiments. When the research funds ran short, they continued their experiments using used equipment from private companies.

To achieve TMR, it was necessary to make the insulator sandwiched between the metals into a thin film down to the nanometer level. This was also an advantage for Miyazaki, who had experience in making thin metal films. Eventually, he discovered that TMR could be achieved at room temperature by using aluminum oxide as the insulator. He succeeded in making a uniform and highly accurate thin film, and announced the groundbreaking result of a magnetoresistance ratio of about 18% at room temperature in 1995.

Miyazaki's results reached the ears of Yuasa, who had just started his career as a researcher. "Rather than achieving steady and solid results, I set goals by thinking about what I would like to achieve first," said Yuasa. At this time, too, he set a goal of exceeding 100% magnetoresistance ratio, which was considered difficult at the time, out of "youthful foolishness."

In 2001, a theory was announced that an even larger TMR should be achieved if magnesium oxide was used as the insulator. Experiments were conducted all over the world, but no results were obtained. While many researchers withdrew from the field for fear of failure and damaging their reputations, Yuasa refused to give up and continued his research, saying, "My strength was that I had just started my research and had nothing to lose." He eventually discovered a way to use magnesium oxide as a single crystal, and in 2004 announced a TMR with a magnetoresistance ratio of 180%, surprising the world.

GMR was the subject of the Nobel Prize in Physics in 2007, and TMR continues to evolve to this day. Looking at the current situation, Miyazaki said, "It feels like a dream when I think back to the time when no one paid any attention to it." Yuasa said, "The world is progressing quickly. It's already time to think about the next mechanism to replace TMR."

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Miyazaki Terunobu

Born in Saitama Prefecture in 1943. Completed his doctoral course at the Graduate School of Engineering, Tohoku University in 1972. After working as an assistant at the same university and at the University of Regensburg in West Germany (at the time), he became a professor at Tohoku University in 1991. Since 2007, he has been a professor at the same university's Advanced Institute for Materials Research.

Yuasa Shinji

Born in Kanagawa Prefecture in 1968. Completed his doctoral course at the Graduate School of Science and Engineering, Keio University in 1996. After working as a research officer at the Electrotechnical Laboratory, Agency of Industrial Science and Technology, in 2004 he became head of the Spintronics Research Group in the Electronics Research Division of the National Institute of Advanced Industrial Science and Technology.

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Yukio Fukuyama (79), pediatrician

Tatsushi Toda (47), clinical geneticist

Tamio Endo (53), and biochemist are fighting intractable diseases across generations and specialties.

It is rare to have a disease named after a Japanese person. One of them is "Fukuyama type muscular dystrophy." From the discovery to identifying the causative gene and elucidating the mechanism of onset, including similar diseases, all were done by Japanese people. The efforts of three people of different ages and specialties bore fruit.

Fukuyama, who joined the pediatric department of the University of Tokyo Hospital in 1953, noticed that in his fifth year, infants diagnosed with cerebral palsy and severe physical and mental disabilities were showing symptoms of muscle weakness that could only be seen in muscular dystrophy. At

the time, muscular dystrophy accompanied by brain damage was unknown. In 1960, when 15 similar cases were collected, Fukuyama reported it at an academic conference as a new disease combining congenital brain damage and muscular dystrophy.



左から
遠藤 達三さん、福山 幸夫さん、戸田 達史さん。

(From left) Tamio Endo,
Yukio Fukuyama, and Tatsushi Toda

“At first, we were criticized that such severe changes in the brain could not be muscular dystrophy,” said Fukuyama. He steadily accumulated clinical research to be able to distinguish it from other types of muscular dystrophy. Since the 1980s, the name “Fukuyama type” has appeared in textbooks around the world.

Toda, who was born in 1960, the year the Fukuyama variant was reported, has been trying to uncover its cause.

In 1990, while he was a member of the Department of Neurology at the University of Tokyo, he happened to attend a conference and learned that the quickest way to identify the causative gene was to study patients born as a result of incest. “I was shocked, thinking that this was it,” Toda said. He wrote to muscular dystrophy treatment facilities across the country and ran around asking for blood from cooperating patients.

In 1993, he discovered that the causative gene was located on chromosome 9. In 1998, he found that a mutation had occurred in the gene that produces a protein consisting of 461 amino acids. He named this protein “Fukutin” after the Fukuyama variant.

Fukuyama variant is the second most common type of muscular dystrophy in Japan, with around 30 patients born each year. He discovered that it was a disease unique to Japanese people that spread from a genetic mutation in just one person more than 2,000 years ago.

Meanwhile, Endo, who had been studying the relationship between glycans, which are chains of various sugars, and living organisms, had been studying proteins with glycans attached to them in the membranes of muscle cells since around 1995, and was analyzing the structure and function of muscles. He elucidated the gene for the enzyme necessary for the synthesis of this glycan. In order to investigate the relationship with diseases, he asked Toda, who was analyzing the genes of the Fukuyama type, to collaborate on research.

In 2001, he discovered that glycan abnormalities caused by mutations in the gene for this enzyme cause a disease called MEB, which is similar to the Fukuyama type. He then revealed that similar glycan abnormalities occur in patients with the Fukuyama type and in patients with similar diseases who also suffer from similar congenital brain disorders.

Fukutin acts by attaching to this enzyme. Endo says, “If we replenish these enzymes, there is a possibility that the symptoms caused by glycan abnormalities can be improved.” A path to treating diseases that have no cure is beginning to emerge.

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Fukuyama Yukio

Born in Miyazaki Prefecture in 1928. Graduated from the University of Tokyo Faculty of Medicine in 1952. After serving as an assistant professor at the University of Tokyo Faculty of Medicine and head of the pediatrics department at the National Children's Hospital, he became a professor at Tokyo Women's Medical University in 1967. He became a professor emeritus at the same university in 1994. He has been an honorary member of the American Academy of Neurology since 2006. He continues to practice medicine at three clinics.

Toda

Tatsushi Born in Gifu Prefecture in 1960. Graduated from the University of Tokyo Faculty of Medicine in

1985. After serving as an assistant professor at the University of Tokyo Institute of Medical Science and an associate professor at the University of Tokyo Institute of Medical Science, he became a professor at Osaka University Faculty of Medicine in 2000. He has also served as director of the genetic medicine department at Osaka University Hospital since 2004. He has received the Japan Society of Human Genetics Award and the Japan Society of Neurology Award, among others.

Endo Tamao

Born in Chiba Prefecture in 1954. Completed his doctoral course at the University of Tokyo Faculty of Pharmaceutical Sciences in 1982. After serving as an assistant professor at the University of Tokyo Institute of Medical Science and head of the glycobiology department at the Tokyo Metropolitan Institute of Gerontology, he became director of the Aging Genomic Function Research Department at the same institute in 2005. He has also served as a visiting professor at Tokyo Metropolitan University since 2006.

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◆ Pluripotent cells: The fruit of painstaking research Shinya Yamanaka (45), stem cell biologist

It was thought that once somatic cells differentiated into tissue cells such as skin, liver, and stomach, they would not differentiate any further. This conventional wisdom in developmental biology has been overturned by the discovery of pluripotent cells called induced pluripotent stem cells (iPS cells). It has been demonstrated that

when four genes originally present in mouse and human somatic cells are overexpressed in the cells, they return to an undifferentiated state (initialization) and pluripotent cells can be created. Unlike embryonic stem cells (ES cells), which have been the representative of pluripotent cells until now, there is no need to destroy fertilized eggs.



Shinya Yamanaka

A study at Kyoto University has found that ES cells can be made by fusing ES cells with somatic cells. He felt that somatic cells also have potential. "Rather than a field where research is already well advanced, I decided to take on the challenge of realizing the initialization of somatic cells."

What is the factor behind initialization? First, he assumed that it would be the same as the factor that maintains the pluripotency of ES cells, and began with computer genome analysis.

There are more than 10,000 genes that are thought to be related, even just in the database. He rearranged these genes on a computer and combined multiple combinations to collect genes that are thought to induce initialization and pluripotency. After four years, they finally narrowed it down to 24.

The first 24 candidate genes contained factors important for reprogramming. "We were lucky," Yamanaka said. Things

went quickly from there. Using knockout mice that students had previously developed, in which certain genes had lost their functions, they reduced the number of genes introduced into the cells one by one while examining their functions, and in a few months they were able to narrow it down to four factors. They found that expressing four at the same time, rather than one at a time, worked well.

"I never thought it would be so easy to create," he said. At the time, it was around the time that the fabrication of human clone embryos in Korea was revealed. To be on the safe side, they carried out multiple verification experiments and imposed a gag order until the paper was published.

In December of last year, they also succeeded in reducing the number of genes introduced to three. The research team found it during a control experiment, but was initially unable to reproduce it. This was due to a

slight difference in the timing of the drug use.

These results were achieved through the combined efforts of more than 50 people. He likened this research to his favorite sport, saying, "This research is like a relay race. This award is a coach's award," and praised the students' efforts.

This result avoids ethical issues such as the use of fertilized eggs, and there are hopes that it will be applied to regenerative medicine in the future. However, Yamanaka said, "I don't want people to have excessive expectations or be excessively disappointed." In order for iPS cells to be useful in regenerative medicine in the future, he said, "We need broad collaboration, from basic medical researchers like me to researchers in fields closer to clinical practice."

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Yamanaka Shinya

Born in Osaka Prefecture in 1962. Graduated from Kobe University School of Medicine in 1987. After working as an assistant at Osaka City University School of Medicine and a professor at the Genetics Education and Research Center of the Nara Institute of Science and Technology, he became a professor at the Kyoto University Institute for Frontier Medical Sciences in 2004. He received the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science Prize in 2006.

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